

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AGR-20 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 AID-20

CIEP-03 OMB-01 CEA-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 /154 W
----- 011331

R 242315Z SEP 74

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4447

INFO AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMCONSUL BELIZE

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 5257

PASS AGRIC/FAS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, GT

SUBJECT: ESTIMATED AGRICULTURAL LOSSES FROM HURRICANE FIFI

1. VARIOUS GOG AGENCIES AND AGRICULTURAL ENTITIES ARE MAKING SURVEYS OF CROP AND ANIMAL DAMAGES RESULTING FROM HURRICANE FIFI AND HEAVY RAINS THAT FOLLOWED HIGH WINDS. PRESIDENT'S SECRETARY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ESTIMATED LOSSES COULD RISE TO \$30 MILLION BUT SAID CONCRETE INFORMATION IS NOT YET AVAILABLE.

2. AGATT, MEANTIME, HAS ARRIVED AT EARLY AND VERY TENTATIVE LOSS TOTAL OF \$16 TO \$17 MILLION THROUGH INTERVIEWING SPOKESMEN VARIOUS SECTORS. VALUE OF 2.5 TO 3 MILLION BOXES OF EXPORT BANANAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN LOST IN THE HURRICANE WOULD BE \$5 TO \$6 MILLION; 38,000 METRIC TONS CORN, \$5 MILLION;
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14,000 MT RICE, \$4.6 MILLION; 7,000 MT WHEAT,

\$1.12 MILLION; OTHER CROPS, INCLUDING LIVESTOCK, GUESSTIMATED AT \$280,000, BRINGING TOTAL TO \$16 TO \$17 MILLION.

3. TRADITIONALLY A BRIEF DRY SPELL, OR CANICULA, OCCURS IN LATTER HALF OF MAY-OCTOBER RAINY SEASON AND IS FOLLOWED BY HEAVY RAINS THAT LAST UNTIL MID-OCTOBER AND HELP TO DETERMINE CROP YIELD AND PRODUCTION. LAST WEEK, AS POST-CANICULA RAINS BEGAN TO FALL, HURRICANE FIFI BLEW ITS WAY ONTO NORTH COAST OF HONDURAS WITH FORCE SAID TO BE UNEXAMPLED IN THIS CENTURY; WITH SOMEWHAT LESS VIGOR THOUGH STILL IN GREAT GUSTS IT PUMMELED CARIBBEAN PORTS AND COASTLANDS OF GUATEMALA AND BELIZE, ALTHOUGH WINDS DID GREATEST DAMAGE GUATEMALA THURSDAY NIGHT, THEY WERE FOLLOWED BY NATIONWIDE HEAVY RAINS THAT FELL WITHOUT LETUP UNTIL SUNDAY. THESE AND A SATURDAY BACKLASH FROM FIFI CAUSED RIVERS TO OVERFLOW ON GUATEMALA'S PACIFIC PLAINS AS WELL, ISOLATING PEOPLE AND VILLAGES BUT APPARENTLY INFLECTING ONLY RELATIVELY MINOR DAMAGE ON VALUABLE EXPORT COMMODITIES (SUGARCANE, COTTON, LIVESTOCK) PRODUCED ON THAT COAST.

4. ALTHOUGH PHOTOS OF FLOODED HACIENDAS AND BROKEN CORN FIELDS FILL PICTURE PAGES OF LOCAL NEWSPAPERS, IT SEEMS FROM ALL AVAILABLE REPORTS THAT FARM LOSSES, WITH LIKELY EXCEPTIONS OF BANANAS AND RICE, WERE NOT SEVERE; IF COMPARED WITH DEVASTATION IN HONDURAS, THEY WERE MINOR. THE FOLLOWING BRIEF ROUNDUPS, BY CROP, ARE OFFERED WITH REMINDER THAT OFFICIAL FIGURES ARE NOT YET AVAILABLE AND UNOFFICIAL REPORTS ARE OFTEN CONTRADICTORY.

5. FOOD CROPS:

WHEAT. WINDS AND RAINS THAT SWEPT HIGHLANDS ARE LIKELY TO HAVE REDUCED ALREADY SMALL 1974-75 CROP, ESTIMATED AT 37,000 SHORT TONS, TO ABOUT 30,000. THIS MEANS GUATEMALA MAY HAVE TO IMPORT MORE THAN USUAL VOLUME TO MEET DOMESTIC NEEDS, PERHAPS 75 TO 80 THOUSAND TONS.

CORN. GUATEMALA'S STAPLE FOOD GROWN IN ALL PARTS OF COUNTRY BY SMALL FARMERS, 1974-75 CROP COULD BE REDUCED BY UNCLASSIFIED

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ABOUT 5 PERCENT TO ESTIMATED 710,000 MT.

RICE. MOST RICE IS GROWN ON CARIBBEAN COAST AND CONSENSUS IS THAT 1974-75 CROP WAS HEAVILY DAMAGED. WE ARE ESTIMATING 33 PCT. LOSS FROM EARLIER EXPECTATIONS, OR TO 30,000 MT (MILLED).

BLACK BEANS. BECAUSE OF LOCATION AND STAGE OF GROWTH,

THIS STAPLE FOOD CROP PROBABLY WAS NOT DAMAGED.

6. EXPORT CROPS:

BANANAS. DEL MONTE SPOKESMAN TENTATIVELY ESTIMATES EXPORT LOSS
AT 2.5 TO 3.0 MILLION BOXES VALUED AT \$5 TO \$6 MILLION.

COTTON. NATIONAL COTTON COUNCIL ESTIMATES CROP DAMAGE
AT LESS THAN 1 PERCENT FROM WATER LOGGING IN FEW FIELDS.

SUGARCANE. NOT SERIOUSLY AFFECTED. SUGAR ASSOCIATION
FORESEES NO REPEAT NO REDUCTION IN OUTPUT.

COFFEE. NO REPEAT NO DAMAGE REPORTED.

LIVESTOCK AND MEAT. NO ASSESSMENT YET MADE, BUT EXPECT
POSSIBLY FOR POULTRY IN NORTH, WE WOULD GUESS DAMAGE TO BE
MINOR.
ANDREWS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CROP DESTRUCTION, DISASTER REPORTS, STORMS, FIFI
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 SEP 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974GUATEM05257
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740270-0216
From: GUATEMALA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740920/aaaaaqjl.tel
Line Count: 134
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2002 by maustmc>; APPROVED <03 FEB 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ESTIMATED AGRICULTURAL LOSSES FROM HURRICANE FIFI
TAGS: EAGR, GT
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005